

GUM.

In an article reproduced from the *Madras Times* by the *Stamp Collectors' Fortnightly*, concerning an official inquiry into the fact of letters to India from Australia so frequently arriving minus stamps, it is stated that the absence of the stamps is due, not to light-fingered Indian clerks, but to the quality of the gum used in Australia, and that loose Australian stamps are being continually found in the mail-bags. No doubt, as a result of the said official inquiry, representations will be made to the various Australian authorities, and the evil will probably be remedied by the adoption of some better adhesive than that now employed. We do not know which particular part of the Australian continent is the offender, as we have not noticed a flagrant lack of adhesiveness in the current stamps of any of these colonies. But the question reminds us of the enormous difference in quantity and quality that exists in the adhesives employed in various countries.

For those who live in damp places, the very worst gum of all, in our humble opinion, from a collector's point of view, is that used by the United States. Probably most of our readers have noticed its extraordinary hygroscopic nature; so that stamps with original gum, properly mounted with hinges, after a very short sojourn in a damp place, will absorb sufficient moisture from the air to cause them to gum themselves firmly down to the page. Only the other day, opening a box of many hundreds of thousands of common stamps of all countries that had been lying by for some months, we noticed that many of the U.S. stamps were in blocks—not "blocks" in the philatelic sense of the word (i.e., parts of sheets), but veritable blocks in the ordinary acceptance of the term—i.e., masses of stamps sticking together in a lump! On the other hand, the sensitiveness to damp of the U.S. adhesive material renders it an easy matter, as a rule, to peel the stamps off the envelopes to which they are attached. And thus the said material has two bad and opposite qualities: (1) The stamps stick when they are not required to do so, and (2) they can be peeled off when they ought to hold fast!

In some hot climates—Japan, for instance—an altogether different adhesive is employed. This stuff, whatever it is, on being wetted, swells up enormously, after the manner of gelatine, without becoming particularly sticky, and we have often wondered what this adhesive can be if it is not gelatine.

The other day, in removing some native Indians from the paper to which they were attached, we were struck by the filthy nature of the gum and the quantity of foreign matter in it. In this case, however, we came to the conclusion that possibly the gum may have been all right, but that the

person who stuck them on the letters must have been employed in the delectable occupation of betel-chewing, or something similar.

As to the fault of non-adhesiveness, which keeps cropping up from time to time in various countries, as in the instance referred to in the commencement of this article, it must not be forgotten that very often it is the paper which is at fault, rather than the gum. In Austria, for instance, some of the stamps of 1890-91 are on very thick and hard transparent paper, having a strong tendency to curl up, so that it was very difficult to get them to stick. The thick-paper stamps of 1850, on the contrary, were fairly tractable, but it was a different style of paper, and the gum was abundant. We fancy that if a good class of gum were employed (two coats being given), and the stamps were printed on decidedly thin paper, we should hear no more complaints as to lack of adhesiveness.

BOARD OF TRADE OFFICIAL STAMP.

This cut represents a stamp that has been in our possession some nine years, and we illustrate it in the hope of eliciting some information from English specialists. It is the current 2½d. perforated with a large crown and B.T., and is on an official letter to H.B.M. Consul-General in Berlin. We have received (in England) one or two



letters from the Board of Trade, but so far as we remember they bore no stamps; so we presume that the official stamps (if they may be thus named) are only used for foreign correspondence. Has anyone seen other values so perforated?

Messrs. Whitfield King and Co. inform us that they received specimens some years ago from the British Consul in Tangiers, and they believe the stamps are still in use for letters from the Board of Trade to British Consuls abroad.

Monaco Forgeries.—The *Philatelic Monthly* states that a quantity of forged Monaco stamps are in circulation, particularly the 40 cent and 75c. of 1886. The design is said to be a very close and dangerous imitation; but fortunately the counterfeitors have perforated the stamps 11½. Instead of the proper gauge of 14 by 13½. Most of the forgeries are cancelled with a date-stamp of 22nd Jan., or 25th Jan., '97. We have not come across any of these counterfeits as yet, and if any reader who happens to possess them would kindly send them for examination, we shall be pleased to give accurate details in a future Supplement.

UNITED STATES' PERIODICAL STAMPS.

The *Stamp Collectors' Fortnightly* publishes a decree of the Washington P.O. Department concerning the sale of the above stamps to collectors. We mentioned, in a former Supplement, the fact that the stamps were to be sold; and this decree names the conditions, &c., the labels being on sale from 15th March to 31st Dec. 50,000 complete sets have been made up, the face-values being 1, 2, 5, 10, 25, 50 cents, and 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, and 100 dollars. They may be had of all first-class postmasters, or from the Third Assistant P.M. General, at the price of 5 dollars per set. Only full sets will be sold, and if more than one set is ordered, the stamps of each value can be had unsevered, in strips or blocks. No guarantee can be given that the stamps shall be all perfectly centred. They are of no use for postage, and cannot be redeemed or exchanged for other stamps by the P.O. No more than the said 50,000 sets will be sold, and the excess above that number, together with the plates, will be destroyed. The decree from which the above details have been gathered is signed by J. A. Merritt, the Third Assistant Postmaster-General.

Since the above was written, we have received the March number of the *Philatelic Monthly* of New York, which states that there was a great rush for these labels in New York and other places. In New York alone 3000 sets were sold in a day and a half. And now comes a very disagreeable piece of news, on the same authority. In order to make the sets complete, some of the values were reprinted; and the said journal has found, in the sets sold, reprints of the 5, 10, 20, 50, and 100 dollars, together with originals of all these except the 5 dollars. According to this, there would seem to be no originals of the 5 dollars in these sets, so that originals of that value will be rare.

STOLEN STAMPS.

From the very commencement of my humble efforts in the expert line, I have been accustomed to receive from youthful collectors letters of enquiry concerning various written and printed surcharges on the stamps of our Asiatic colonies; and the letter given below, from the *Delhi Morning Post*, which I have just read in the *Stamp Collectors' Fortnightly*, has suggested to me that I might write a few lines for the benefit of the said youthful collectors. The colonies in which the surcharging is commonest are India, Ceylon, and Hong Kong, and the surcharges usually found are: (1) The written word "stamped"; (2) Written initials; (3) Name of a firm, hand-stamped. In all cases the object is the same, i.e., the prevention of theft, just as large

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